

What's in a name?

Degrees of Explicitness in attitudes towards Colloquial Belgian Dutch

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Colloquial Belgian Dutch (CBD) or *Tussentaal*, a variety situated between the traditional base dialects and Standard Belgian Dutch (SBD), is claimed to be spreading and entering contexts that used to be the exclusive domain of SBD (Geeraerts & Van de Velde 2013; Grondelaers & Speelman 2013). From a perceptual point of view, this seems surprising: the sparse data available on attitudes towards SBD and CBD show that status and power are still firmly associated with the former variety, while the latter is strongly downgraded in this respect (e.g. Impe & Speelman 2007; Vandekerckhove & Cuvelier 2007). How, then, do we explain the expansion of CBD into the territories of SBD, if it is not associated with any of the traits traditionally imputed to standard varieties? Based on a speaker evaluation experiment, Grondelaers & Speelman (2013) suggest that CBD may be lacking in traditional prestige, but that certain of its features enjoy a form of modern, dynamic prestige on a more implicit level.

In this study, we aim to contribute to mapping out the highly understudied attitudinal landscape of Belgian Dutch by following up on the aforementioned research into attitudes towards CBD and SBD. We measured attitudes towards both varieties for traditional as well as modern prestige using four rating tasks with differing degrees of explicitness in a between-subject design. Participants were presented with the same audio samples, yet these were labelled differently in each of the four conditions of the experiment. In the more explicit conditions, CBD was labelled as either 'tussentaal' or 'dialect', while in the less explicit conditions, labels referring to the speakers rather than the varieties were used.

The first results show that, overall, SBD was strongly associated with aspects of traditional prestige, like being serious and highly educated, while CBD speakers were thought to be more modern and dynamic, even in the most explicit condition. In our paper, we will discuss the results in detail, as well as reflect on the methodological impact of labelling varieties in this type of explicit attitude measure.

References

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